

## Oyster industry gets mooring area

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Selectmen have approved new licenses for 19 floats for oyster growers in a newly designated aquaculture mooring area, which is part of the 2016 Duxbury bay mooring plan adopted by the town this winter.

The floats are in the tidal flats heading east from the channel toward Duxbury beach.

The new aquaculture float area will benefit both the oyster farmers and the public as it allows a specific area for them to work on their shellfish –

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getting them cleaned and iced quickly before sending them to market, according to town officials.

“The float plan allows growers to adjust to changing conditions on the bay and it will help public safety and ensure public health,” said Alan Hoban, chairman of Duxbury’s Shellfish Advisory Committee.

The oyster growers use their floats, or floating huts, to process the oysters in accordance with state laws to reduce the possibility of bacteria growth. In warmer months, oyster farmers have to battle the bacteria *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, which can be found in raw oysters and can make people who eat the shellfish sick with diarrhea, vomiting and abdominal pain within two to 48 hours. Last October, there were up to seven cases of *Vibrio* linked to the consumption of raw oysters from Duxbury and Kingston bay. *Vibrio* is a naturally occurring bacteria that thrives in warmer water temperatures, usually found in Massachusetts from May to October.

The new mooring plan has an area at the top edge of the harbor set aside for up to 32 oyster grower’s floats. Its parameters are outlined in the town’s shellfish management plan. The Shellfish Advisory Committee recommended approval of the float licenses.

The following people obtained float licenses: John Brawley of Old Cordwood Path, William McCormick of Tremont Street, Gregory Morris of Keene Street, Arthur Bennett of Hicks Point Road, Michael George of Surplus Street, Stephen Gilbert of Summer Street, Joseph Grady of Wendell Pond Road, Christian Horne of Mayflower Street, Benjamin Lloyd of Temple Street, John McCluskey of Partridge Road, Donald Merry of Washington Street, Christopher Phillips of Linden Lane, Peter Prime of Myrtle Street, Charles White of Washington Street, Brian Zec of Bayridge Lane, Robert Knecht of St. George Street, William Bennett of White Street, Brad Doyle of Bay Road and Scott Doyle of Abrams Hill.

Selectmen also approved 12 licenses for growers to rent space on upweller floats at the Duxbury Bay Maritime School. Upweller floats keep mesh bags of seed oysters oxygenated with pumps circulating the water. This help the seed grow faster and protects them from premature death.

DBMS has been renting space on the upwellers under its dock floats for many years but now the state requires the town to license the users.

The Shellfish Advisory Committee supported the upweller licenses, which are governed by DBMS's Aquaculture Upweller Management plan.

As this was the first time the state mandated the town to require these licenses, Jack Kent of Bayside Marine expressed his concern that the state could change the regulations to protect shellfish that would then negatively affect his gas pump dock, which is located not too far from the DBMS upweller floats.

He wanted selectmen to add language to their motion that would protect his business if state regulations changed to say there couldn't be any gas pumping near the growing oyster seed. "We've been pumping fuel there for 50 years," Kent said.

Selectmen discussed making the changes but decided not to, saying that Kent was protected by the current law. Selectman Ted Flynn thought it was premature to protect Kent's business since there was no indication that regulations would change.

"I feel that we're trying to address a problem that doesn't exist yet," said Flynn.

Hoban said the upweller licenses must be renewed annually so the selectmen will have more chances to review them.

Shellfish growers will pay a \$100 administrative fee for a float license and a \$100 administrative fee for an upweller license. They must also pay a mooring fee.

Duxbury's oyster industry employs 100 people year round and another 50 seasonally and produces oysters with a wholesale value of \$10 million annually, according to information provided by DBMS to the federal Army Corp of Engineers.